

Page Denied



**Directorate of
Intelligence**

Secret

25X1

Cuba-Nicaragua: Havana Reviews Its Options

25X1

An Intelligence Assessment

Secret

*ALA 86-10053
December 1986*

Copy **471**

Page Denied



**Directorate of
Intelligence**

Secret

25X1

Cuba-Nicaragua: Havana Reviews Its Options

25X1

An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [redacted]
[redacted] the Office of
African and Latin American Analysis. It was
coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

25X1

Comments and queries are welcome and may be
directed to the Chief, Middle America-Caribbean
Division, ALA, [redacted]

25X1

Reverse Blank

Secret

*ALA 86-10053
December 1986*

Secret

25X1

**Cuba-Nicaragua:
Havana Reviews
Its Options**

25X1

Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 1 December 1986
was used in this report.*

We believe Cuban President Castro's main strategy for supporting the Nicaraguan regime—to buy time for the Sandinistas to strengthen their institutional base for a politically stable and militarily strong Marxist-Leninist state—is likely to remain intact over the next year. Despite Cuba's increasing economic problems and debilitating long-term involvement in Africa, we see no indications of any weakening of Castro's commitment—underscored by Cuba's continuing military and economic assistance as well as by Castro's personal involvement and political guidance—to the Sandinistas. Indeed, Castro's muted public reaction to renewed [redacted] and the strengthened US commitment in Central America in general suggests that the Cuban leader will not make any dramatic policy shifts in the near term that could provoke a US military response or alienate a new US Congress. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

25X1

In our opinion, Castro is likely to weigh carefully the impact of [redacted] over the next several months before increasing the Cuban advisory presence in Nicaragua or broadening its role substantially. The Cuban leader probably will focus his attention at first on propaganda and lateral escalation elsewhere in Latin America, rather than risk directly confronting the United States. Nonetheless, if the influx of [redacted] to improve their capabilities and expand their area of operations significantly, Havana will almost certainly take several political and military countermeasures, including:

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

- Providing Managua with additional—perhaps a few hundred—trainers, advisers, radar operators, logistics and maintenance technicians, [redacted] and pilots.

25X1

25X1

- Lobbying Moscow on behalf of Managua to procure more Soviet assistance, particularly helicopters, patrol boats, and air defense equipment, including perhaps SA-2 and SA-3 surface-to-air missile systems and associated radars. On the basis of training levels and capabilities of Nicaraguan personnel, Cubans initially would have to man much of the equipment, and Havana—and probably Moscow—would have to increase its maintenance role.

- “Regionalizing” the war by pressuring leftist allies in Costa Rica, Honduras, and El Salvador to increase hit-and-run attacks and terrorism directed at civilian and military targets. Cuba will urge them to try to intimidate regional leaders into reducing support for [redacted]

25X1

Secret

ALA 86-10053
December 1986

Secret

25X1

[redacted] some time ago
 Castro provisionally approved the use of surface-to-air missiles by the Salvadoran insurgents and, if the Nicaraguan rebels begin using such weapons effectively, we believe he would provide the Salvadoran groups with matching firepower.

25X1

- Further “internationalizing” the war by accelerating the recruitment of larger numbers of volunteers from Latin America to fight in Nicaragua and escalating revolutionary violence in other Latin American countries—Colombia and Chile are the most likely cases—as a means of dividing and distracting US attention and resources.
- Intensifying propaganda and public relations efforts in multilateral forums and foreign capitals, mainly emphasizing the principle of nonintervention; and drawing parallels between US actions in Central America and the US experience in Vietnam, as well as working in Managua to reduce discord among Sandinista Directorate members caused by increasing domestic problems and external pressures.
- Professing support for the Contadora talks or backing any plan—such as Guatemalan President Cerezo’s idea of convening a Central American parliament—that gives Castro and the Nicaraguans a better chance of breaking down regional negotiations into individual bilateral deals beneficial to the Sandinistas. [redacted]

25X1

If the above measures are not sufficient to block continuing [redacted]
 [redacted] or halt insurgent advances, Castro, in our view, will encounter serious constraints. Castro fears provoking a US intervention or alienating the new US Congress, and, under conditions of a gradually intensifying insurgency, we believe he would shy away from sending large numbers of troops to fight the rebels. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

[redacted] Public statements by Cuban officials also indicate that Moscow has made it clear to Castro that Cuba would stand alone in any military engagement with the United States. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

Secret

Secret

25X1

If the insurgents make unexpected, dramatic gains over the next year, Castro's past strategy suggests that at first he would push any ongoing negotiations. He might counsel the Sandinistas to seek a cease-fire, perhaps administered by the United Nations, and to offer concessions regarding political freedoms at home. By the same token, however, we doubt that Castro would urge Managua to offer rebel leaders an equal role in the government and the military. Castro, in our view, would urge the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) to fight to the last and to engage any successor government, particularly an FDN-led (Nicaraguan Democratic Force) regime, in a protracted insurgency. []

25X1

We think it unlikely, but cannot rule out the possibility, that Castro—who can act unpredictably and emotionally in the face of a challenge—will pursue a more aggressive policy. He might risk sending troops to Nicaragua with the limited objective of protecting key cities and military installations—as they do in Angola—to free additional Sandinista units for combat. Moreover, if Castro became convinced that the insurgents were on the threshold of ousting the Sandinistas or that US intervention was inevitable anyway, he might send Cuban combat units into battle against the rebels or participate with the Nicaraguans in a massive attack against insurgent bases in Honduras. The egotistical Castro might hope that a US military intervention—and his lead role in opposing it—would cripple US–Latin American relations for years, bolster leftist groups in other countries, and assure his place in history as the foremost “anti-imperialist” of his time. []

25X1

Secret

25X1

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Key Judgments	iii
Introduction	1
The Scope of Cuban Involvement	1
Playing the Negotiations Angle	2
Public Relations Support	4
Political Mentoring	4
Castro Confronting a Faltering Strategy	5
Hard Choices Ahead for Castro	6
Increasing Role at the Front	6
“Regionalizing” the War	8
“Internationalizing” the War	9
Propaganda and Diplomatic Maneuvering	9
Castro’s Wild-Card Potential	10
Implications for the United States	11

Secret

Secret

25X1

Figure 1



Secret

viii

STAT

Secret

25X1

Cuba-Nicaragua:
Havana Reviews
Its Options

STAT

Introduction

President Castro's assertion at Cuba's Third Communist Party Congress in February that he would do everything possible to provide additional aid to Managua if the United States increased its assistance to the insurgents underscored his commitment to the Sandinistas. The continued maintenance of 5,500 to 6,500 Cuban military and civilian advisers in Nicaragua also attests to the depth of Castro's resolve to back the regime in Managua, his only ally in the hemisphere and the sole payoff of 26 years of fomenting armed revolution in Latin America. US Congressional approval of \$100 million in aid for the rebel forces, however, and the diminishing prospects for a Contadora-sponsored regional peace agreement probably will add to the pressures on Nicaragua and to the costs to Cuba of its continuing large-scale involvement.

This paper is an examination of Cuba's past and present strategy and tactics in supporting the Sandinista regime, and Castro's options in light of recent regional developments and the renewal of US aid to the opposition. As such, it examines the scope of Havana's political and military aid to Nicaragua over the past year, and explores the flexibility of Castro's policy regarding Nicaragua. It then assesses how the Cuban leader is likely to adjust his policies to the changing situation in Central America, including the potential for taking far riskier courses of action. Finally, the paper considers the implications for the United States of a deepening Cuban role in Nicaragua.

The Scope of Cuban Involvement

Although Havana's tactics in supporting the Sandinista regime have varied over the years as pressures on Managua have ebbed and flowed, we believe Cuba's main strategy—to buy time for the Sandinistas to strengthen their institutional base for a politically stable and militarily strong Marxist-Leninist state—has remained intact. The most important contribution



Figure 2. Sergio Ramirez, Fidel Castro, and Daniel Ortega

Jeanette Harris ©

STAT

by Havana to its ally in Managua, in our opinion, has been the assistance provided by its military advisers to the growing Sandinista armed forces and security services.

we estimate that some 5,500 to 6,500 Cuban military and civilian personnel advise the regime in Managua.

Cuban military advisers are involved in counterinsurgency operations, intelligence activities, and training of Nicaraguan military conscripts. In addition, Cuban civilian and technical advisers occupy positions in virtually every Nicaraguan institution and service organization, from education to telecommunications, and play a critical role in molding prerevolutionary institutions into instruments of Sandinista control.

Despite Cuba's increasing economic problems at home and its debilitating long-term involvements in Africa, we have seen no indications of any weakening of Castro's commitment to the Sandinistas.² From a



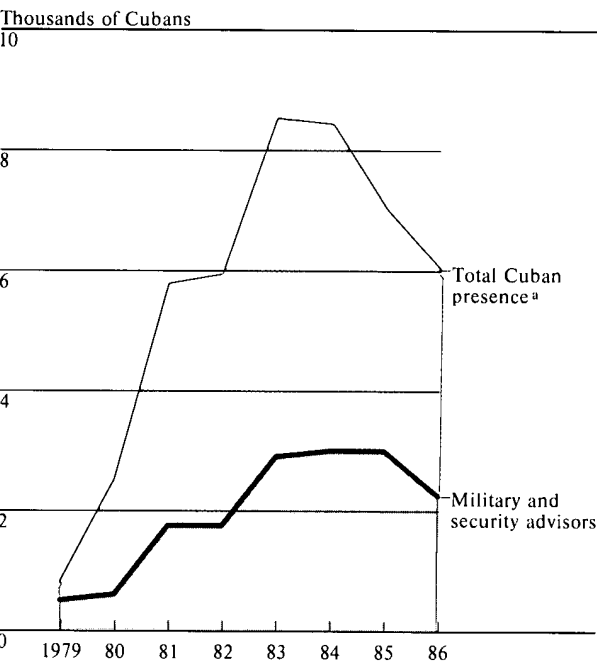
Secret

manpower perspective, Cuban involvement has remained relatively constant over the past year. US Embassy and [redacted] and technical assistance on military equipment—remains critical to the Sandinista regime, even though Havana has phased out its assistance in some areas—such as education—as the Nicaraguans have become more self-sufficient. Indeed, as the military and economic pressures on Nicaragua have grown over the past few years, [redacted] Castro has been able to maintain a high level of influence with Sandinista leaders through continuing material aid and political counsel. [redacted] Nicaraguan President Ortega has traveled to Havana on several occasions this year to personally consult with Castro. While Castro has proved willing to maintain a relatively constant level of support to Managua, he also has been careful to avoid expanding Havana's involvement beyond the point that could trigger a military response from the United States. Cuba remains the Sandinistas' primary role model and the Cuban leader their principal mentor. Moreover, Havana continues to be involved in almost every aspect of Nicaragua's affairs at home and abroad. [redacted]

Playing the Negotiations Angle. In the diplomatic realm, Havana has worked especially hard at the Contadora-sponsored peace talks to limit Washington's ability to exert pressure on the Sandinistas. According to [redacted] the US Interests Section reporting from Havana, Cuban officials clearly view the continuation of the Contadora process as a means to put pressure on Washington—through Latin American countries and US public opinion—to refrain from direct military intervention. Moreover, Castro undoubtedly hoped that setting the prospect of a negotiated settlement before the US public would block the administration's efforts to substantially increase aid to the anti-Sandinista insurgents. [redacted]

Although not a direct party to the Contadora talks, the Cubans have taken an active role at the meetings advising Sandinista negotiators and lobbying the Central American, Contadora, and support groups' countries to support Nicaraguan arguments. [redacted]

Figure 3
Nicaragua: Estimated Cuban Presence, 1979-86



^a Decline shown in 1986 reflects Intelligence Community reassessment of Cuban military presence in Nicaragua. [redacted] It does not represent an actual decline of the overall Cuban presence in Nicaragua or of Cuban military personnel.

[redacted] 311433 12-86

[redacted] Nicaraguan negotiators generally consult with Cuban officials before regional group meetings, often traveling to Havana to do so. [redacted] the Cubans worked hand in hand with the Nicaraguans at Contadora conclaves. [redacted]

[redacted] Moreover, US Embassy reporting

Secret

Secret

Cuban Military and Civilian Assistance Programs

Stiffening the Sandinista Ranks. Havana's strategy in support of Managua's counterinsurgency effort is designed to give the Sandinistas enough military equipment, planning and logistics assistance, and air support to limit guerrilla activity largely to rural areas and along the borders. Indeed, although there are no indications that Cuba has increased its advisory presence substantially or introduced combat units into Nicaragua, the estimated 2,000 to 2,500 Cuban military advisers (Intelligence Community analysts recently agreed that, [redacted])

[redacted] our previous estimate of 2,500 to 3,500 Cuban military advisers in Nicaragua should be lowered to 2,000 to 2,500) serving there are playing an increasingly active role in developing and implementing counterinsurgency operations, as well as helping Nicaragua absorb, maintain, and operate its growing inventory of Soviet weapons. [redacted]

Cuban military assistance appears to have had its greatest impact over the past year on the conduct of Sandinista air operations. [redacted]

[redacted] Cuban pilots are performing a variety of combat support missions—including troop transport, medevac, and air cover for arms convoys. Moreover, Cuban-piloted Nicaraguan MI-25 (Hind) helicopter gunships have flown combat missions against insurgent forces to support government troops in northern Nicaragua. In one example, a Sandinista unit with an usually large number of Cuban advisers apparently was saved from being overrun by rebel forces by the Hind gunships. Two Cuban pilots, moreover, were among those killed last December when rebels downed a Nicaraguan MI-8 helicopter with an SA-7 surface-to-air missile. [redacted]

Although we do not believe the number of Cuban military advisers has risen over the last year, the Cuban contribution to the Sandinista ground offensive may be growing in importance. [redacted]

[redacted] a

Sandinista military deserter reports that Nicaragua's irregular warfare battalions are periodically accompanied by their Cuban trainers on combat operations. Cuban personnel also are involved in operating Nicaraguan radar sites [redacted]

Institutionalizing "Sandinismo". The 3,500 to 4,000 Cuban civilian personnel that we estimate are currently working in Nicaragua continue to assist, as they have since 1979, in the development of the Sandinista security and intelligence services, the militia, mass organizations, and other institutions—such as the media—as instruments of social control and political regimentation. The Cubans also have traditionally played, and still play, a major role in the service areas—health, education, agriculture—that revolutionaries typically employ to mobilize popular support for the regime. [redacted]

Although there may be a slight drawdown of Cuban civilian personnel as projects are completed and the fighting widens, Cuban construction units probably will continue to play an important role on such military projects as the airfield at Punta Huete and improvements to the arms-receiving port at El Bluff. The airfield at Punta Huete, when completed, will have the longest runway in Central America and will be capable of handling high-performance jet fighters and interceptors. The Matagalpa-Puerto Cabezas highway now under construction will substantially increase the mobility of Sandinista military units in the remote northeast. [redacted]

25X1
25X125X1
25X125X1
25X1
25X1

25X1

25X1
25X1

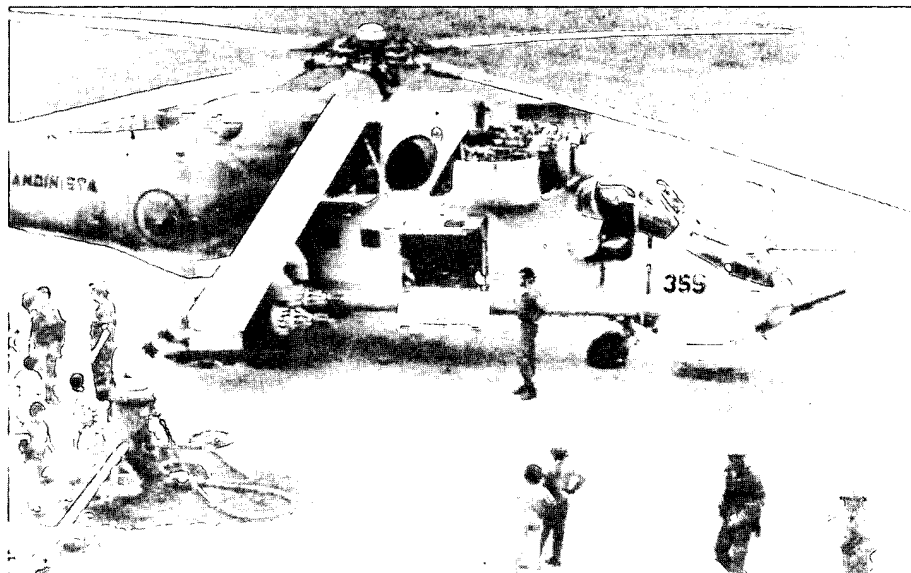
25X1

25X1
25X1

Secret

Secret

Figure 4. Nicaraguan MI-25
helicopter [redacted]



UPI ©

STAT

from various Central and South American capitals underscores the extent to which the Cubans aggressively sought to consult with influential players before important meetings. [redacted]

Public Relations Support. [redacted]

[redacted] Havana and Managua have worked closely in developing and coordinating their propaganda efforts. [redacted]

[redacted] Reporting from various US Embassies shows that Cuba led the unsuccessful effort at the recent Nonaligned summit in Harare to gather support for Nicaragua's bid to host the next summit and subsequently chair the Movement. [redacted]

Another facet of Havana's public relations support is arranging the travel of third-country "international brigades" to Nicaragua. [redacted]



Political Mentoring. Castro apparently is concerned about the possibility of factionalization among the Nicaraguan leadership and clearly wants to avoid the type of revolutionary self-destruction that occurred in Grenada in 1983. The Cuban leader was largely responsible for the merger of the three major insurgent groups into the Sandinista Front during the war against Somoza, and the Cubans apparently still play a role in ensuring that personal rivalries do not

25X1

25X1
25X125X1
25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

Secret

damage regime stability. [redacted]

[redacted]

Thus far, Castro's public reaction to the changed—and more threatening—situation in Nicaragua has been muted. The Cuban leader barely mentioned Nicaragua in his annual 26 July speech commemorating the beginning of his revolution—a forum Castro often uses to convey a message to US policymakers. Indeed, since the late June US Congressional vote the Cuban leader has made several major speeches in which he has given only scant attention to the stepped-up funding of the insurgents. The Cuban media have published attacks on the action, but, according to the US Interests Section, these amount to no more than routine indignation. Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister Alarcon told US media representatives in late July that Cuba was already responding in kind—as promised in Castro's statements to the Third Cuban Communist Party Congress—but denied that the Cuban aid involved an increase in advisers, supplies, or weapons. [redacted]

25X1
25X1

25X1

25X1

Havana also has counseled the Sandinista leadership on how to handle their internal opposition, particularly the Catholic Church [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] no quantitative increase of Cuban assistance in the last few months, however, and Alarcon's remarks, in our opinion, probably were only a face-saving exercise to cover Castro's earlier bluster. [redacted]

25X1
25X1
25X1

The Cubans' unusually phlegmatic response to the US action, especially in view of the diminishing role of the Contadora group, represents, in our opinion, a studied attempt to avoid overreaction to an accomplished fact. Cuban officials have told US Interests Section personnel several times that the Sandinistas will defeat the insurgents whether they have US support or not; Havana probably does not want to appear excessively concerned at this point. Moreover, although Castro's strategy regarding Nicaragua has suffered a setback, in our opinion, the increased US pressure on Managua has clearly not panicked or paralyzed Cuban policy. Castro, a keen student of US politics, is certain to watch for any indications that funding for the insurgents might be curtailed or stopped. Havana has had ample experience with protracted insurgencies in Africa and is likely to weigh carefully the impact of US aid on insurgent performance before making any major policy moves. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

Castro Confronting a Faltering Strategy

In our view, renewed US aid to the anti-Sandinista rebels—as well as the loss of momentum in the Contadora talks—has made it clear to Castro that his strategy of playing the negotiating angle and US public opinion has not succeeded in easing the political and military pressures on Managua. Moreover, from Castro's perspective, continued US support for the insurgents runs the risk of enabling them, in time, to seriously challenge the regime or, conversely, could lead to direct US military action if the rebels, despite substantial backing from Washington, fail to dislodge the Sandinistas. [redacted]

25X1

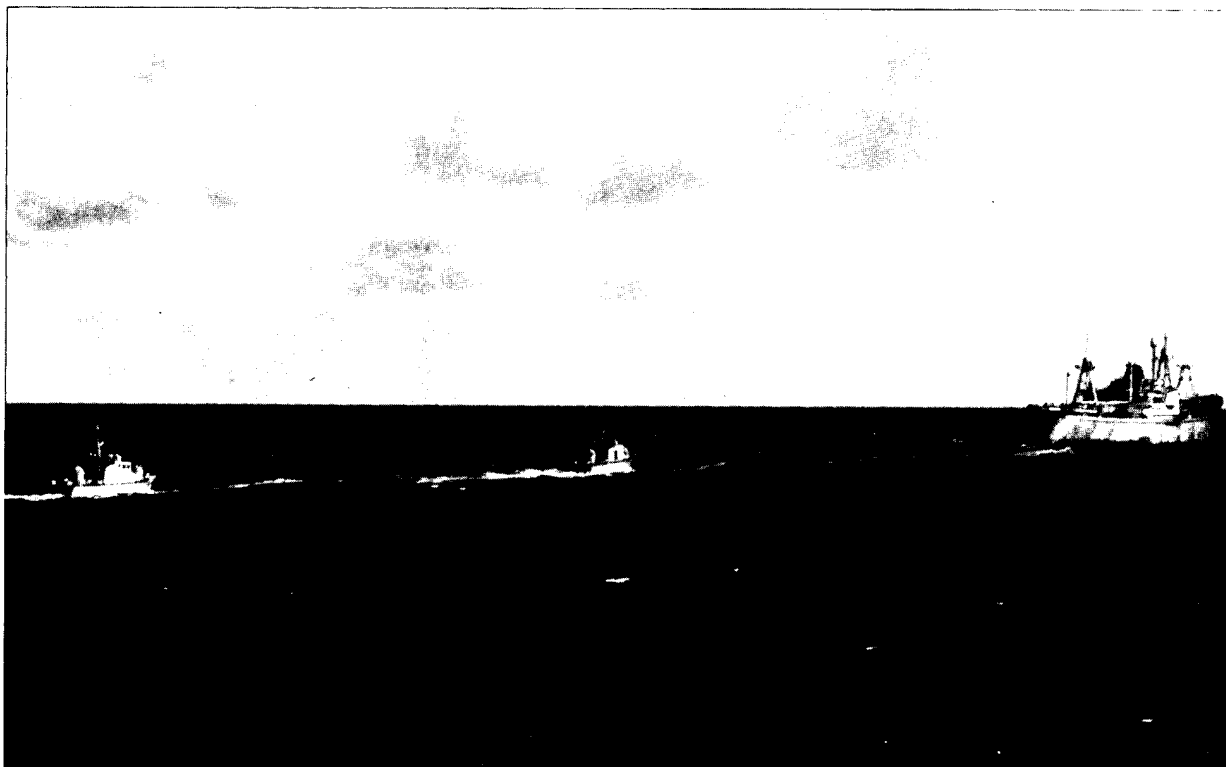


Figure 5. Two Zhuk patrol boats being delivered to Nicaragua from Cuba [redacted]

STAT

Hard Choices Ahead for Castro

Castro's studied silence thus far suggests to us that Cuba is reviewing its options in light of Washington's increased role, considering the implications of a wider war, and deciding what to do about the more negative outlook for Cuba's Nicaraguan interests. The Cuban leader probably recognizes that [redacted]

[redacted] spells, at a minimum, heavier fighting in the near term. While we do not expect Castro to make any dramatic policy shifts or sudden moves to raise the stakes in Nicaragua over the next few months, we believe Castro will shift more emphasis and resources to Cuba's military role. Moreover, Castro's past performance suggests he will also modify his propaganda and diplomatic efforts, support alternative negotiation opportunities if the Contadora-group efforts die, and advise the Sandinistas to take still tougher measures against internal opposition groups. [redacted]

Increasing Role at the Front. We believe Castro will respond to the military challenge in Nicaragua mainly by intensifying the programs and operations that

Havana already has in place. As the tempo of fighting increases, we believe Cuba will send additional combat-experienced military advisers, pilots, and medics to Nicaragua—perhaps a few hundred personnel—to assist Sandinista counterinsurgency operations. [redacted]

[redacted] some Cuban pilots have flown combat missions in Nicaraguan helicopter gunships, and, in our view, this practice will become more commonplace as the Sandinistas add to their helicopter inventory. We also believe Cuban personnel will take a larger role in logistics, maintenance, intelligence, communications, and medical services. [redacted]

Castro almost certainly will lobby the Soviets for more aid—particularly military hardware—for Nicaragua. For example, Havana is likely to buttress Nicaraguan requests for more helicopters and perhaps patrol boats—both are critical to the Sandinistas' ability to interdict the guerrilla logistic network and

25X1
25X1
25X1
25X1

25X1

25X1

Secret

STAT

Havana's New Men in Managua



*Brigadier General Lopez
Cuba* [redacted]

commanded several Cuban armored units. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

[redacted] *Lopez was also commander of an armored division in southern Angola during 1976-79. His last known position was Chief of the Southern Army Corps of the Cuban Eastern Army in 1983 and 1984.* [redacted]

25X1

25X1

25X1

Earlier this year Brig. Gen. Nestor Lopez Cuba, 44, replaced Division Gen. Arnaldo Ochoa as commander of Cuban military personnel in Nicaragua. Like Ochoa, Gen. Lopez fought in the revolution against Batista, participated in various overseas military actions, and is a member of the Cuban Communist Party Central Committee. An armored forces specialist, Lopez may be working to improve the capabilities of Nicaragua's armored units. Trained in armor tactics at a special Soviet military school, he led one of the first tank units to arrive at Playa Giron during the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion and subsequently has

resupply lines. Castro also may press the Soviets to provide Nicaragua with air defense weapons, including perhaps SA-2 and SA-3 surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems and associated radars, to deter U-2 reconnaissance overflights and defend against high-performance aircraft. Another SAM system Castro may ask Moscow to provide is the mobile SA-6 system that would substantially improve the Sandinistas' ability to interdict insurgent airborne resupply operations. Few Nicaraguans have been trained sufficiently on air defense equipment—none that we know of on the SA-6 system—and Cuban personnel would have to initially man any SAM batteries in Nicaragua. The Soviets also may provide the Sandinista military with additional radar-guided antiaircraft artillery batteries that probably also would require some Cuban assistance to train Nicaraguan crews and integrate the new weapons into the Sandinista air defense network.

[redacted]

Havana is also likely to continue helping Managua in other equipment-oriented areas [redacted]

25X1

[redacted] three Zhuk-class patrol boats were delivered to Nicaragua from Cuba last summer [redacted]

25X1

25X1

25X1

The Nicaraguans have installed a number of coastal surveillance radars on the Atlantic coast, and the delivery of the patrol boats appears to be a move aimed at upgrading their patrol and interdiction capability along the sparsely populated eastern coast.

25X1

Other areas of Cuban support are likely to include the island's continued use as a transshipment point for Soviet weapons deliveries to Nicaragua. Many of the larger military items—such as aircraft and patrol

25X1

boats—are shipped by the Soviets to Cuba, where they are assembled and tested prior to their delivery to Nicaragua. An AN-30 aerial survey aircraft shipped to Cuba from the USSR earlier this year was assembled in Cuba and subsequently flown into Nicaragua. [redacted] several Sandinista AN-2 light transport aircraft and at least one MI-8 helicopter have been returned to Cuba for repairs in recent months. The Sandinistas apparently lack adequate repair facilities and expertise—deficiencies that suggest that, as the Nicaraguan military acquires more equipment, it will become increasingly dependent on Havana for much of its depot-level maintenance. [redacted]

“Regionalizing” the War. Aside from stepping up Cuba’s military role in Nicaragua, Castro is also likely to respond to growing military pressure against the Sandinistas by increasing his pressure on Managua’s neighbors. To date, US Embassy reports indicate Havana has been employing a carrot and stick approach in dealing with Nicaragua’s neighbors: trying to dilute Costa Rican and Honduran opposition to Nicaragua by offering to mediate problems with the Sandinistas, while concurrently supporting leftist groups in both countries. We believe that part of any Cuban response to greater anti-Sandinista insurgent activity will include attempts to increase pressure on San Jose and Tegucigalpa by promoting more leftist agitation in the two countries over the next year:

[redacted]

We also believe Castro will look favorably on any decision by Managua to intensify military pressure along the Honduran and Costa Rican borders. This could include incursions into the neighboring countries in “hot pursuit,” or large-scale assaults against guerrilla base camps such as the attack by some 2,000 Nicaraguan troops into Honduras last March. While these decisions are likely to be made in Managua on the basis of the military situation, Castro will see such attacks as complementing his own pressures on San Jose and Tegucigalpa, as well as possibly creating political problems between the United States and Honduras. Nonetheless, Castro probably would not permit Cuban pilots to fly helicopter airstrikes against the rebel camps any time soon because of the potential political, propaganda, and military backlash from the United States if a Cuban pilot were to be captured in Honduras. [redacted]

[redacted]

Elsewhere in Central America, we believe Castro and the Sandinistas would like to see more hit-and-run attacks by the Salvadoran insurgents—particularly against US personnel and other American targets—in part, to help ease the pressure on Nicaragua. [redacted]

[redacted]

25X1

25X1

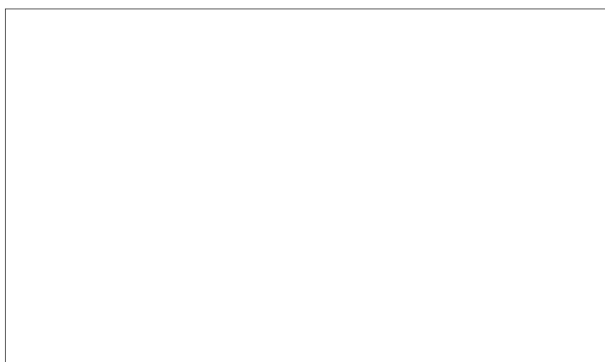
25X1

25X1
25X1

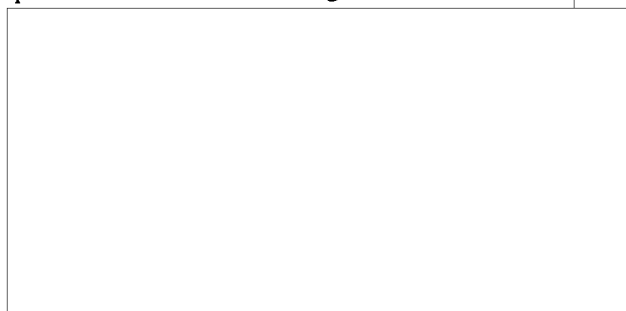
25X1

25X1

Secret



“Internationalizing” the War. We believe Castro also will seek to “internationalize” the war in an attempt to respond to greater pressure on Managua. One tactic could include expanding Cuban sponsorship of volunteer international brigades in Nicaragua with personnel drawn from throughout Latin America.



the Cubans may believe that combat deaths of volunteers from other Latin American countries—such as Venezuela, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Argentina—in Nicaragua could help promote public demonstrations and anti-US sentiment in Latin American capitals.



Castro’s efforts to divide and distract US policy attention and resources may also include activity beyond the Central American region.



The insurgent

arms caches recently uncovered by the Chilean military contained enough weapons and equipment to outfit over 5,000 guerrillas, and compelling evidence indicates that they were delivered to Chile by Cuban fishing boats. Castro also may encourage his guerrilla allies to increase violence in other countries—such as Colombia and Ecuador—although most leftist groups in Latin America are capable of only sporadic attacks—not sustained terrorism campaigns. Finally, although the Cubans were surprised by the events in Haiti last winter, Havana has moved quickly to build its ties to the Haitian Communists and may encourage political violence there to create another trouble-spot for the United States in the Caribbean basin.

Propaganda and Diplomatic Maneuvering. Cuba may also try to “internationalize” the conflict on the diplomatic front. Such an effort could include intensified lobbying and propaganda in multilateral forums, foreign capitals, and in the media. We believe Cuba’s propaganda will emphasize—even more than it does now—four basic themes:

- Washington’s disregard for the tenet of nonintervention that is held as inviolable by Latin American leaders.
- The “David versus Goliath” nature of the conflict.
- The increasing parallel of the conflict to the US experience in Vietnam.
- Human rights violations by the US-backed guerrillas.

On the basis of Havana’s efforts to date, these themes will be directed at different audiences. The first two themes will most likely be aimed, in large part, at the Latin American audience in an attempt to generate hemispheric solidarity on behalf of Managua; the latter two will be used to play to US audiences in an attempt to influence future support for aid to the insurgents. In playing the propaganda angle, Cuba also is likely to continue emphasizing the findings of the International Court of Justice against the United States; Havana worked hard to include a statement of support for those rulings in the final resolution of the Nonaligned summit in Harare in September.

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

Another element of Havana's diplomatic maneuvering is likely to revolve around potential negotiation forums. While the diminished importance of the Contadora negotiations has undermined an important element of Cuba's strategy to deflect US pressure on Nicaragua, we believe Havana will continue to profess support for the Contadora talks and to do what it can to keep the process alive. Because the prospect of viable negotiations is necessary, from Havana's perspective, to lend credence to any propaganda pressure on Washington to drop its support to the anti-Sandinistas, Castro is likely to back—and advise Managua to participate in—any negotiation opportunities that arise as an alternative to the Contadora talks. [redacted]

Among possible negotiation alternatives, we believe Havana would prefer Guatemalan President Cerezo's idea of convening a Central American parliament. Havana's favorable media treatment of Cerezo suggests that Castro believes Guatemala can be persuaded to be even more independent of the Contadora Core Three—Honduras, El Salvador, and Costa Rica—and helpful to Nicaragua in talks. The Cubans also probably believe that their two-track policy of intimidation (supporting leftists) and olive branch (offering to mediate problems among Central American leaders) would be more effective in the context of talks restricted to the Central Americans. [redacted]

From the perspective of Havana, a forum limited to its Central American neighbors holds some promise. Cuban officials probably believe—correctly, in our view—that, if negotiations were moved to a Central American parliament setting, their intimidation tactics—such as putting military pressure on the borders with Honduras and Costa Rica—would be more effective. For example, Nicaragua might be better able to shift the negotiations from a comprehensive regional package to individual bilateral deals with its neighbors that are beneficial to the Sandinistas. This, however, is not to say that the Cubans and Nicaraguans would not face potential challenges in a Central

American parliament. A parliamentary setting would eliminate or minimize the role of mediators who, as US Embassy reporting in the case of the Contadora talks indicates, can be helpful to the Sandinistas in deflecting pressure from the other Central American countries. Moreover, the Central American countries might have more success focusing negotiations in a parliamentary setting on the issue of pluralism and internal democracy in Nicaragua. [redacted]

While Havana is probably willing to use negotiations to protect Managua, we believe there are limits Castro would not want to exceed. Unless the Sandinistas are under extreme duress, we do not believe Castro would agree to negotiations or political concessions to the United Nicaraguan Opposition/Nicaraguan Democratic Force (UNO/FDN). However, the Cubans might favor talks with other opposition groups—perhaps KISAN, the main Indian rebel group, or the Southern Opposition Bloc—to split them away from the United Nicaraguan Opposition and co-opt them by offering them minor roles in the government. [redacted]

[redacted] From a broader perspective, a shift in venue to the Organization of American States probably would be strongly opposed by Havana because Cuba's access is limited—Cuba is not a member—and support for Nicaragua would be diluted by the participation of Latin American leaders unsympathetic to the Sandinistas. [redacted]

Castro's Wild-Card Potential

Castro has considerable maneuverability and a formidable array of policy tools that he can employ to help Nicaragua cope with a slowly intensifying insurgent challenge. Nonetheless, we believe that under present circumstances there are upper bounds on Cuban policy in Nicaragua. The most serious constraint is Havana's fear of provoking US military retaliation or a direct US intervention in Nicaragua. [redacted]

[redacted] Moscow

25X1

25X1

25X1
25X1

25X1

25X1
25X1

25X1

25X1
25X1

25X1

presents another constraint on Cuban policy. In the past, the Soviets have warned the Cubans to move cautiously in Central America. []

they have made it clear to Castro that Cuba would stand alone in any military engagement with the United States. []

If the insurgents make unexpected, dramatic gains over the next year, however, we cannot rule out the possibility that Castro—who clearly can act unpredictably, defiantly, and emotionally in the face of a challenge—will pursue a more aggressive policy. Moreover, we believe Castro would be more inclined to act independently of Moscow in protecting the Nicaraguan Government than he would on any other foreign policy issue. This wild-card potential of Castro's probably would manifest itself, however, only if the anti-Sandinista insurgents began operating in the heavily populated western plains and more seriously threatened the regime in Managua. With such a scenario, we believe Castro might risk sending troops to accomplish the limited objective of protecting key cities and military installations in Nicaragua—as they do in Ethiopia and Angola—to free additional Sandinista units for combat. Castro could try to blunt international reaction by pointing to the greater US role in the Nicaraguan conflict and by appealing to broad apprehensiveness in Latin America about a perceived threat of direct US intervention. Although Castro has shied away from political terrorism as a tactic in the past for fear of provoking US retaliation, we believe that the Cuban leader also might react to the imminent overthrow of the Sandinistas by calling on his longtime radical allies throughout the Third World to undertake violent actions directed at US Embassies, military bases, and private businesses. []

On the political front, Castro might concurrently counsel the Sandinistas to offer substantial concessions with respect to political freedoms and to seek an international arbiter—perhaps the United Nations—as a means of gaining some breathing space. Should the Sandinista regime be in danger of falling, however, we doubt Castro would ask Managua to grant rebel leaders—especially the FDN—an equal role in the government and the military. Rather, we believe Castro would exhort the Sandinista cadre to fight to the end and to continue the fight by going to the hills even if they are overthrown. []

Implications for the United States

The United States will continue to face formidable and determined opposition from the Cubans on all aspects of its Nicaraguan policy. In addition to expanding Cuba's military assistance to Nicaragua, Cuban military advisers are likely to take a more active role in combat. []

We believe that Castro will "internationalize" the conflict in other ways. For example, Havana will pressure leftists elsewhere in Central America to increase their antigovernment and anti-US activities. Castro probably will urge leftists in other Latin American countries to agitate and pressure their governments to oppose US policy. As a result, we believe that governments in the region—particularly Honduras and Costa Rica—will request additional US aid in exchange for their support of US policy. It also may mean that both official and private US interests abroad will be increasingly subject to Cuban-inspired terrorism and political violence. []

If the insurgents begin to score major successes on the battlefield within the next 12 to 18 months and the momentum of the war clearly shifts to their advantage, we believe Castro will once again favor negotiations as a tactic to gain time for the Sandinistas and perhaps move the United States to prematurely relax diplomatic, economic, and military pressure on Managua. If military pressure on the Sandinistas is maintained during talks, however, Castro probably would conclude that the United States and other Central American countries would not genuinely pursue negotiations, and he would urge Managua to fight to the end rather than bargain away their control. []

If the insurgents begin to seriously threaten the Sandinistas' stability and no worthwhile approach existed for negotiations, the Cuban leader might even risk provoking a US military intervention by sending combat forces to Nicaragua. Castro is capable of taking such a high-risk course of action, in our opinion, because, even if such a gambit failed and led to a US invasion, he would draw some satisfaction that US relations with Latin America would be damaged for years and leftist organizations in the region would be rejuvenated. []

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

Secret

Secret